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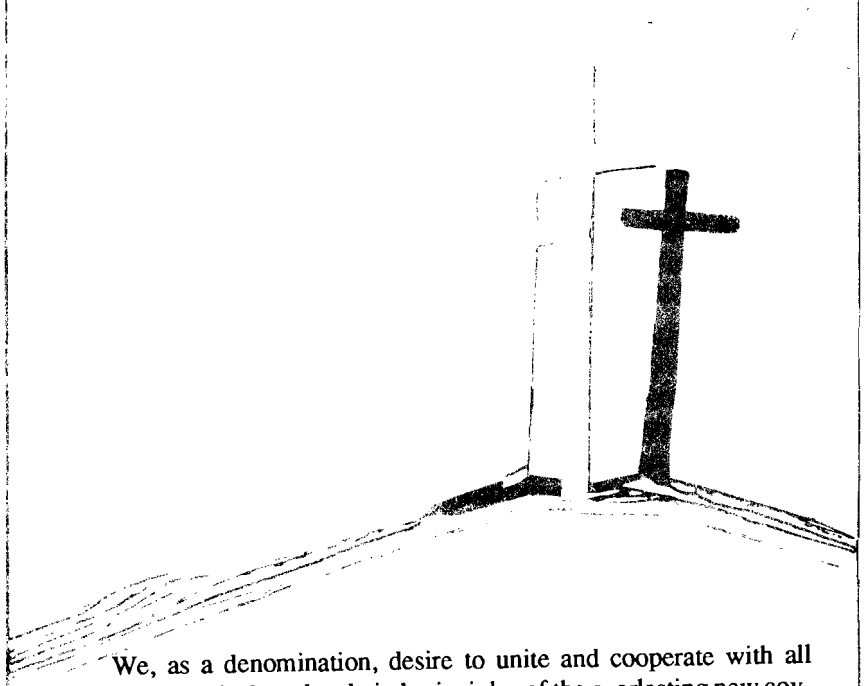

We, as a denomination, desire to unite and cooperate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the everlasting new covenant. -- Alexander Campbell, *Mill. Harb.* 1840, p. 556.

In This Issue:

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Facing Up to Who and What We Are
Don't Pour Water On Them!

Volume 34, No. 9 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **November, 1992**

What the Old Testament Means to Us. . No. 19

WHAT THE PROPHETS TELL US ABOUT GOD

Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth. — Is. 6:5

In this installment I want to point out some of the exciting things some of the prophets say about God, especially noting what these disclosures of the nature of God mean to us. This could be thought of as a listing of some of the great passages of the Old Testament about God, but I intend that it be more than that. I want to show how the prophets' view of God was the basis of the message they preached. That is the lesson for us, for our religion (and our message to our world) will be no more than our view of God.

The above passage from Isaiah illustrates this. Isaiah was not ready to say, "Here I am, Lord, send me" (Is. 6:9) until he saw the holiness of God. This became his theme: Yahweh is "the Holy One of Israel" (Is. 1:4). And he did not see his own sinfulness until he saw the holiness of God, a timely message for our own time and for the modern church. We should be so awed by God that we tremble in his presence like Isaiah did in the temple.

Isaiah records that he actually saw God in the temple, "seated on a high throne" (Is. 6:1) He heard angels sing of God's holiness. The temple was filled with smoke and the foundations of the threshold shook. Isaiah was so enraptured by it all that he wrote of being devastated: "I am undone, I am coming apart, for my eyes have seen the Lord." He now sees for the first time how weak and sinful he is: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among people of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5).

This is one of the great lessons of the OT: *God's holiness points up human kind's sinfulness; we can be cleansed of our sinfulness by turning to "the Holy One of Israel."* The prophet puts it succinctly in one of the Bible's great passages: "Come now, let us talk this over, says Yahweh. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Is. 1:18, Jerusalem Bible).

Of the many things that Jeremiah says about God, the most sobering is that he does not allow sin to go unpunished. Moreover, because of his people's sins he will take away their most treasured security. In the case of Israel this was the temple itself and the city of Jerusalem, which they considered impregnable and forever protected by God. "The temple of God is here!" was their cry of assurance (Jer. 7:4). Nothing could happen to the temple or to the holy city, nothing, sins or no sins! Jeremiah told them they were trusting in delusive words, which brought their wrath.

You know the story of how the Babylonians came and destroyed both temple and city, just as Jeremiah said. Other prophets also told Israel what it was impossible for her to accept. Ezekiel tells how "Yahweh rose to leave the city," (11:23) and

Micah says woefully, "Zion will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble" (3:12). But all along the people were saying, "Is not Yahweh in our midst? No evil is going to overtake us" (Micah 3:11). It is a disturbing truth for us moderns who are reluctant to take sin seriously.

Jeremiah also pinpoints what repentance really means: "Circumcise yourselves for Yahweh; off with the foreskin of your hearts, lest my wrath should leap out like fire" (Jer. 4:4). The great truth that the real circumcision, which is identified as "the circumcision of Christ" in Col. 2:11, is first set forth in the OT. It is also Jeremiah that appeals to God's mercy as he prays for his people, "Correct us, Yahweh, gently, not in your anger or you will reduce us to nothing" (10:24).

The prophet Hosea in one short sentence names the point of religion when he hears God say, "What I want is love, not sacrifice" (6:6). That it is one of the great truths of Scripture, stated in only a few words, is evidenced by the fact that it was one of our Lord's favorite passages. Jesus referred to it again and again in his efforts to show the Pharisees what true religion is all about (Mt. 9:13;12:7). He told the Pharisees to "go and learn" what Hosea meant. Since they would have known the passage by heart already, he must have been telling them to go and do works of mercy, and then they would not be so critical of what he and his disciples were doing.

Amos is unique in that he was but a plain shepherd, and yet he excelled in using word-pictures that drove home his message with telling effect. He is a good example of how the Bible is often as relevant as today's newspaper. The sins Amos points to have a way of being prevalent in every age: luxury of the rich, pride and arrogance, corruption in the courts, deceit in trade, oppression of the poor, deterioration of spiritual values. Amos finds the answer in the character of God, telling the people that the Lord is not interested in the shallow externals of their religion, but "Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (5:24).

While Nahum is a short, relatively unknown book, it has much to say about the awesomeness of God. He is wrathful, takes vengeance on his enemies, and will not leave the guilty unpunished. He presides over the storm and whirlwind, rebukes the sea and drains it, and the mountains tremble before him. And he gives us this great line: "The Lord is slow to anger but immense in power" (1:3).

Micah also gives us one of those short summaries of what God expects of his people: "This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God" (6:6). The context for that statement is unique in that a trial is being conducted with the people the accused, God is the accuser, the prophet the prosecuting attorney, and the surrounding mountains the jury. The verdict is not that God wants animal sacrifices by the thousands or libations of oil, which the people were willing to give to appease God, but he wants the hearts of men and women, that they treat each other justly, show tenderness, and be humble before the God of heaven.

Prophets like Nahum speak with passionate assurance that God is in control of this world, and that he is sure to judge the wicked and reward the righteous. He reassures us with: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him" (1:7)

Zechariah, who prophesied in the late 6th century B.C., learned basic truths from earlier prophets, such as the demand for morality in religion and strong faith in but one God. But unlike the earlier prophets, except Ezekiel, he gives angels an important role in unfolding events, which include Messianic expectations, including a Messianic Jerusalem. One thing he says about God is especially impressive. When he tells how Jerusalem, whose walls had been destroyed, will remain unwalled because it will need no walls, he has God saying, "I will be a wall of fire for her all around her, and I will be her glory in the midst of her" (2:5)

Habakkuk, like Isaiah, is awed by God, and he sees him as one who acts mightily in history: "I am doing something in your days that you would not believe if you were told of it" (1:5). The prophet sees God as "stirring up the Chaldeans" to perform his purposes (1:6). He gives an impressive metaphor in which he pictures himself as a watchman standing on a watchtower "to see what God will say to me." God tells him to write down what he tells him.

Among the things God told the prophet is another of those one-liners that makes its way into the New Testament, one that had great influence on both Paul and Martin Luther: "The just will live by faith" (2:4). The line probably means that people will survive by faithfully clinging to God rather than relying on their own resources. Habakkuk also gives us that majestic description of God: "Yahweh is in his holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before him" (2:18). All these truths have staggering implications for our walk with God.

Malachi may say more about God for its size than any other book in the Bible. It begins with God saying to his people "I have loved you" and it ends with the promise of the coming of Elijah who will usher in the great day of the Lord. In between is the assurance that Yahweh will be the God of all nations, not just of Israel, and "My name shall be feared among the nations" (1:11-14). Unique to Malachi is an appeal for unity based upon the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man: "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" (2:10), and "Did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit?" (2:15)

It is Malachi that challenges the people to give liberally so that "I will open the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (2:10). And it was he that posed the intriguing question, "Can a man rob God?," which he answered by saying one robs God when he withholds tithes and offerings. This too speaks to us, for if we do not learn to give we do not receive.

And it is Malachi who gives us one of the great truths about God, that he listens to us and he is there when we need him most: "Those who feared the Lord spoke one with another, and the Lord listened and heard; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name" (3:16). With Malachi the OT ends on a note of hope, "But to those who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings" (4:2).

The OT, as Alexander Campbell pointed out, gave humanity the starlight age (Patriarchal) and the moonlight age (Mosaic and prophetic age). The coming of John the Baptist, the promised Elijah, gave us the twilight age. But with Jesus Christ came the sunlight age. He is the Sun of Righteousness, and it is in the healing rays of his wings that we are made whole. All of the great institutions and wonderful truths of the OT pointed to the rising of that Sun. — *the Editor*

Change Without Chaos. . .

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (19)

The term "Change Without Chaos" was used at a workshop recently held at the Preston Road Church of Christ in Dallas, called "A Church That Connects." It was sponsored by Hope Network and was conducted by Lynn Anderson and Jeff Nelson. Its purpose was to instruct, inspire, and encourage Churches of Christ to be a church that "connects" by making the right kind of change. The larger-than-capacity attendance was seen as evidence of "the hunger sweeping our fellowship." It is a hunger for change. The Churches of Christ are dying for change, they said.

When I say in this installment that if the Church of Christ is to be saved it must become a changing church, I am not calling for change simply for the sake of change. The change must be positive and creative, displacing attitudes and methods that are no longer effective. The change must be in keeping with the mind of Christ, free of gimickry, pride, and competiveness. And it must be change without chaos, not unduly disruptive and threatening. It must be a balanced change that shows respect for the traditions of the past, the demands of the present, and the possibilities of the future.

Change! The old Greek philosophers saw change as basic to the nature of things. Heraclitus, one of the seven wise men of Athens, insisted that everything is in a state of flux. One cannot step into the same river twice, he insisted, for the river changes between steps. There would be no growth except for change. Only God changes not, and that is because he is perfect.

It is not a question of *if* we change, but *how* we change, for we are all changing all the time. So with churches. In a changing world it is essential that the church changes. It is folly to talk about being a first century church in a 21st century culture. We are to be a 21st century church with a first century faith, but not a 21st century church with a first century methodology, or even a first century view of society. Any institution that survives the centuries must change as the world around it changes or it will be ineffective. This is especially true of the church.

So, we borrow a helpful term from the Dallas workshop on change — "Change without Chaos," but we will add "but with Purpose and Meaning." That is what the Church of Christ must do to be saved: *Effect purposeful and meaningful change, free of undue disruption and chaos.* I say *undue* disruption because change cannot help but be somewhat disruptive for some people. But change need not be chaotic. We may have to rock the boat but we can avoid capsizing.

For change to be purposive it must consider the mission of the church as "the pillar and ground of the truth" in a lost and troubled world. To do this we must change the way we think about a lot of things, such as our attitude toward other religions and other churches. Purposive change may also demand that we see ourselves in a different light, not as a people with exclusive truth but as a community of believers in a search of truth with all other community of believers.

For change to be meaningful it must be more than cosmetic. It must actually turn us in new directions — away from the backwaters of our sectarian past. We must do more than to elect more elders and change the order of worship. We must view leadership in a different light, with elders serving not as a corporate board but as leaders among equals. We must become a church in communication with itself, with an equitable and democratic decision-making process. We must re-examine such mentalities as "the authority of the elders" and "decisions handed down by the elders." How about decisions "passed across" in a way that involves many in the congregation?

Purposive and meaningful change may call for substantial alteration in the way we view and conduct worship. We must see worship, not as an assembly to carry out certain "acts of worship," as if to conform to some check-list, but as a fellowship in the Spirit of all God's children, sharing the presence of God. We must move from seeing God as the prompter, the minister as the performer, and the congregation as the audience to seeing the minister as the prompter, the congregation as the performer, and God as the audience. Worship is to serve and praise God, not to please and satisfy ourselves. We must outgrow the mindset "to please as many in the congregation as possible" by thinking in terms of adoring and glorifying God.

The prayers of the church is a vital part of this. Rather than the wooden, predictable, repetitive prayers by the same limited number of men, Sunday after Sunday, let there be some joy, excitement, and spontaneity. And when God's family gathers to pray may only the males address the Father?

Reading of the Scriptures must also be taken more seriously, planned and prepared. It would be helpful to follow the calendar of readings used by other churches, planned so as to give a balanced diet of much of Scripture, year after year. It is one more way to share with other Christians, with all of us sharing and thinking about the same portion of the Bible, week after week. And let the women do much of the reading.

The assembly of saints is also for the building up of the church. A principle that transcends time and circumstance is: "Let all things be done for edification" (1 Cor. 14:26). Rather than thinking, "Will anyone be upset if we make this change?," let it be, "Will this edify, strengthen, and build up the church?" And this is the answer to those who resist change, those who are upset and say "That is not the way we've always done it." But it is edifying, we must learn to say.

This means we will experiment in worship, trying new things, especially ideas and methods found effective in other churches. Others have led the way in making some vital changes, and they are growing as a result. We must either lead or follow — or get out of the way, as Iacocca put it on TV.

To do all this without chaos we must lay proper ground work for change. We must not surprise people with changes, especially in worship, leading them to respond with, "What next!" We must "talk out" new ideas and methods, involving the entire congregation, before they are tried. The most effective way to do this is in small groups. When a church meets in homes once a month, which is a change many churches have recently effected, it is the ideal place to create the climate for other changes.

If a woman is to take part in a Sunday morning service for the first time ever, plans must be made well in advance. And it must not be done at all until the right climate is created and there is general agreement. This can never be realized until the leadership takes the initiative and works for change. Those with objections are to be treated with forbearance. It is to be pointed out to them that they do not have to have their way, and that it becomes a Christian to be yielding. When such ones cannot adjust to changes that are deemed necessary for the good of the church as a whole, the congregation will have to allow such ones to go elsewhere, always of course with a love that is slow to let loose.

I was interested in some of the suggestions for change in the Dallas workshop, which those attending found very encouraging. The main emphasis was on "Music that makes sense," noting that for this generation music is the "coin of the realm." The workshop presented a variety of musical renditions — solo, choral, antiphonal (groups singing back and forth to each other), and congregational — with a wide variety of songs, but all acappela, with no suggestion that instruments be used in the changing Churches of Christ. Among the handouts at the workshop were dozens of new songs, some written by our own people, songs of joy and praise.

The workshop laid out a number of principles of change for the people to take back to their congregations, such as a church must first see the need for change, and change does not come without resistance. It also suggested that change will generate less heat if options are kept open. Change will not come immediately, and when it is effected it will not last unless it is carefully nurtured.

Finally, the workshop suggested how we can "think" change by realizing that there is no way for the future to be like the past. Nor will the future be what we expect it to be. It also noted that change is more likely when an atmosphere of trust is created.

For Church of Christ folk to hold a workshop on change is itself a testimonial to our capacity for change. And the workshop had to turn folk away who wanted to attend!

Don't sell our people short. The Church of Christ will be saved, after all, by effecting purposive and meaningful change, without chaos. Hopefully sooner, but if not sooner then later. — *the Editor*

Summary and Review. . .

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN SAYING (2)

In this three-part series, which leads up to the demise of this journal with the next issue, I am reviewing things said and done over the past four decades. It give me a chance to get in "the last word" on a number of subjects.

Nature of the Church

One compelling theme through the decades has been God's community in heaven and on earth, the ecclesia — the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic church, both visible and invisible. I have sought to distinguish between the church and a denomination, between the church and the Restoration Movement, between the church and the "Yellow Pages" Church of Christ. I have often placed before my readers the most famous quotation of our heritage outside the Bible itself, Thomas Campbell's "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one."

I have noted that when Campbell wrote that he did not yet have a single congregation in his movement. He understood that Christ's church existed in his own day and had always existed on earth since the day of Pentecost. Like his son Alexander, and like Barton Stone, he believed in the inviolability and the indestructibility of the church. It may be in need of reform, but it has always existed, and he had no illusion that he was called of God to "restore" the true church, as if it had ceased to exist. He saw "The Church of Christ on earth" as a present reality — not the Church of Christ he was going to restore. It was an auspicious beginning for the Stone-Campbell Movement!

Campbell was saying what his heirs have been slow to learn, that the church by its very nature is one and cannot be other than one. In 1973 I took the hint from Thomas Campbell (and the creeds of the ancient church) and did a series on the oneness of the church, the holiness of the church, the apostolicity of the church, and the catholicity of the church. In the same series I showed the distinction between the church and the kingdom, presented the church as a pilgrim community, and indicated how to identify the true church. I quoted Karl Barth to the effect that a true church is where the power of Christ is present in the lives of the people.

If I have a final word on the nature of the church, it would be in reference to the church in the world as a witnessing community. The world is likely to see Christ only through the church, so the church must be *in* the world as the Body of Christ, suffering for the world like Christ did. As for the church at worship and in assembly, I am convinced that much more must be made of Body life. We are "members one of another" and we are to minister to each other. The church is not an assembly of auditors gathered to listen to professionals

Unity In Diversity

What Robert Richardson, the first historian of the Stone-Campbell movement, said about our heritage could be said about this journal: *unity has been its consuming theme.* Unlike most editors among us, all of whom claim to believe in unity, I have emphasized the one unique feature of our heritage that goes back not only to Stone and Campbell but the New Testament itself: *We are free to differ but not to divide.*

The NT makes it clear that the early Christians could and did differ, and even churches differed. The rich diversity of primitive Christianity is one of the recent emphases of NT scholarship. The NT churches were richly diverse, but still they were one in Christ. This means that diversity has its limits. We are united *in* Christ, not outside of Christ. But some in Christ are but babes, others are more mature. Some are conservatives with many scruples, others are liberals with hangups of their own. Differences may put a strain upon our unity and fellowship, but that is where loving forbearance comes in, which is the only means of preserving unity.

Paul and Peter had such differences that Paul once rebuked Peter publicly to his face, but still they were brothers and still in fellowship with each other. This is because they had that love that hides a multitude of sins.

We are free to differ but not to divide! It is a liberating principle. We cannot divide because it is sinful and it goes counter to the apostolic mandate that there be no divisions among us. We cannot divide because it is contrary to our Lord's prayer

for the unity of all believers. We cannot divide because it is a scandal and a disgrace for Christians to be divided. But we can differ, we will differ, as all sincere people do in their search for truth. But our differences lie in areas of opinion, not essentials of the faith. Luke mentions "the things we most surely believe." Here we must be united. It is in peripheral matters, opinions and methods, that we can differ — always lovingly, agreeing to disagree.

Travel Letters

I have written while "on the road" all across America and around the world. There was lots of drama right here in the states, such as "Imprisoned For Truth" (1955), which was the incredible account of my being put in jail in Henderson, Tn. while attending a lectureship at Freed-Hardeman College, where I was once a student. "High Adventure At Pat Boone's House" (1971), in which I told of Pat immersing seven Jews in his swimming pool, and "In A Broken-Down Ambulance in Dallas" (1967), which was an account of a wild ride to the hospital in an ambulance that broke down on the way. By the time they transferred me to another ambulance and got me to the hospital, I had recovered from what proved to be only a heat stroke.

But my favorite travel essay was "The Professor And His Poodle" (1973), written in a Mississippi college town. This professor was given a hard time at the Church of Christ for holding views he read in this journal. I went to visit him and had meetings in his home. At church on Sunday we were both excoriated from the pulpit and abused by some of the members.

It was no big deal to me, but the young professor was devastated. He sat in his livingroom afterwards and unashamedly wept, the tears streaming down his academic cheeks. His poodle climbed into his lap and licked the tears away. It was one of the most touching scenes I had ever witnessed. I told the story of how a man with a broken heart received more love and comfort from a poodle than from his sisters and brothers at the Church of Christ.

My travel abroad through the years has been both exciting and educational, and I have shared much of it with my readers. In 1963 I purchased an airline ticket from "Dallas to Dallas," which allowed me to visit 12 nations in a journey all around the world. I was a Fulbright scholar to Taiwan (Free China we called it) to study Chinese culture for the summer, but found time to visit Buddhist temples in Japan, the Taj Mahal in India, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the pyramids in Egypt, the Acropolis in Athens, the Coliseum in Rome, an orphanage (from which we had adopted a son years before, now deceased) in Germany, the Mona Lisa in Paris, Westminister Abbey in London, William Barclay in Glasgow. While studying in Taipei, I had audience, along with 21 other professors, with Chang Kai Shek at the presidential palace.

When I wrote about all this in the 1963 *Restoration Review,* I named Scotland as my favorite nation visited, gave details of my conversation with Prof. Barclay, and stated that wherever I went I enjoyed people far more than places. Having taught some of their daughters at Texas Woman's University, I was wined and dined by elite families in Taiwan, to the envy of my fellow professors who did not have my advantage. Traveling alone much of the time, I was able to walk the back streets of cities where tourists never go. I wrote of seeing women bathing in the streets of Agra (India).

All these years I have addressed travel letters to my readers from all over the world. From Thailand I wrote on "Teaching Romans in the Heart of Asia." From India (a later visit): "Did Gandhi Go to Heaven?" From Japan (a later visit): "From the Land of Mikado." From New Zealand: "Christian Unity in a New Zealand Village." From Ireland came my most visceral report: "A Grim Night In Northern Ireland," in which I told of an Irish minister, once a policeman, walking me one night through the streets of Armagh, bombed-out in a Catholic-Protestant war. He walked me to my hotel through barricaded streets, quietly telling me that we were in danger to be out. I had noticed we were the only ones in the well-lighted streets. My hotel was kept locked and I could enter only be being identified by the minister. It was indeed a grim night!

Then there was "'Reconciled Diversity' in Geneva," my report on a gathering of ecumenical leaders of the World Council of Churches. I was impressed with the diversity of those present, some coming from Orthodox churches from what was then "the Iron Curtain" and telling of their persecution by the Communists. "My Pilgrimage to Ahorey" told of my visit to Campbell country and to the church where Thomas Campbell was once pastor, and being hosted by the present pastor and his wife, who liked Thomas Campbell but not his son Alexander, who was too belligerent for her. I regaled her with stories of Alexander's softer side, including his tenderness toward his wife amidst tragedy, until she at last conceded, "Well, maybe he was not so bad after all."

Then there were the Philippines, Korea, Singapore, South America, etc., all of which found a place in my travel letters, but this has to stop somewhere. I have made my point. As an editor I have not viewed the church in the world only from my study, but I have been something of an "ambassador at large," in a small way, for the church. I have been with believers of many cultures and tongues, from a bamboo hut in Thailand and army barracks in Korea to a grove of trees in Canada and a Union Church in San Salvador. It has all given me a better understanding of what it means to be the church.

I agree with Augustine that the world is a great book, of which they who never stir from home read only a page.--*the Editor*

FACING UP TO WHO AND WHAT WE ARE

I noted with interest a short article in *Preacher Talk* (Kosciusko, Ms) titled "I Am A Christian" by Cecil May, Jr. It set forth an entree common to our people since the days of Alexander Campbell. Looking at it once more after all these years, I can see that it would strike a "denominaltionalist" as odd, probably more intriguing than offensive.

It goes like this, as Cecil May puts it:

"I am a disciple of Christ . . . but not a Disciple of Christ."

"I am a methodist . . . but not a Methodist."

"I am a catholic . . . but not a Catholic."

"I am an episcopalian . . . but not an Episcopalian."

On it goes down the page, even including, "I am a member of the church of God . . . but not the Church of God." And he had to go out of his way for this one: "I am a member of a congregation which is Christian and independent . . . but I am not of the Independent Christian Church."

As I made my way down the page I presumed he would not likely include his own church in this dubious lineup, but he surprised me with: "I am a member of the church of Christ . . . but I am not Church of Christ."

Then I ask myself, is that really the case with Cecil May or any of the rest of us in Churches of Christ? I wrote to our good brother and told him that we only play games and are less than honest when we talk that way. I admitted to him that I certainly consider myself a part of "the church of Christ" (Church of Christ with a capital "C" suits me as it did John Locke and Thomas Campbell, both of whom used it in a nonsectarian way!), which is the catholic Body of Christ the world over, made up of all those in Christ.

But I am also a member of the "Church of Christ" which began about a century ago when it separated from the Disciples of Christ. To put it another way, I am a member of the "Yellow Pages" Church of Christ, and in particular the Singing Oaks Church of Christ in Denton, Texas.

I am persuaded the same is true of our well-meaning Mississippi brother. Since he is a Christian he is certainly a part of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church of Christ upon earth. But is that all he belongs to? He knows very well that "where he goes to church" is listed in the Yellow Pages as the "Church of Christ" or perhaps "Churches of Christ" in a way that distinguishes it from other churches or denominations on the same page. In his same little mailout brother May lists some of his speaking appointments, such as Gulf Coast Christian Camp and Lubbock Christian University Lectureship.

Brother May, are not that camp and university associated with "Churches of Christ" and not simply the universal church of Christ?

He and I both belong to a denomination known as "Churches of Christ." The difference is that I admit it and he doesn't. That doesn't mean that we are sectarians or that we approve of denominations as such. It may only mean that we can't help belonging to some religious body in addition to that invisible community of Christ in heaven and on earth, the makeup of which is known only to God himself.

I suppose one could be an "Independent" or "Bible Church" or "Non-Denominational," all of which also are listed in the Yellow Pages as distinct religious groups. They are on their way to being denominations, "from sect to denomination" as H. Richard Niebuhr put it. Or one might have no affiliation at all, "just a Christian" one might say. But where would she go to church? If she at last identifies herself with other believers, some church down the street, would she not then belong to something beside "the church of Christ" at large.

It is high time that we be honest and quit playing our little church games that say that we and only we are "the church of Christ," meaning of course the one and only true church, while all others are "denominations." We in Churches of Christ have such connections as Lubbock Christian U., Gulf Coast Christian Camp, the *Gospel Advocate*, and Herald of Truth. Other denominations are not associated with these agencies, but have colleges, camps, journals, and cooperative efforts of their own. We have our own "Directory of Churches of Christ," while other churches have their directories, which, incidentally, is the surest mark of denominational status.

It would be interesting to see how brother May would distinguish between the directory of "the church of Christ," which he describes as "purchased with Christ's own blood," and the directory of "the Church of Christ" affiliated with Lubbock Christian U. Is the listing of God's universal church upon earth the same as the listing of Churches of Christ?

What is so bad about being a disciple of Christ *and* a Disciple of Christ, or a member of the church of Christ *and* the Church of Christ? It is simply accepting where history has brought us. There was first the primitive churches, then the widespread catholic church, then the Greek and Roman Catholic churches, then the Protestant Reformation, then the many denominations, then all sorts of efforts to reform the denominations, which led to still more denominations. We are victimized by history. We have inherited denominationalism. We can hardly help being where we are and what we are.

But we don't have to be sectarians, and we can have a spirit of unity that transcends denominations even in a denomination. We can even be a denomination in protest, which means we can long for that unity that will one day make us all truly one in Christ, surpassing denominationalism. God will do this in his own way and

in his own time. In the meantime we have to be realistic and work *within* denominational structures, which is where all meaningful reform takes place. No one yet has ever reformed a religious body from without.

I hasten to concede, however, that there is merit in brother May's argument about being a presbyterian but not a Presbyterian, etc. It points up a fallacy that the human family has long been heir to, which might be called the fallacy of imbalance, or emphasizing a truth or an idea to the degree that it is no longer valid, such as being a laissez faire advocate to the degree that allows for no government controls whatever. A church might so emphasize an effective method that it becomes its hallmark, such as Methodist Church. Or an ordinance that leads to an imbalanced emphasis as in Baptist Church, or a particularly polity, as in Episcopalian Church. All are sound ideas in themselves, but err through overemphasis.

I mentioned that brother May's argument is as old as Alexander Campbell himself. But notice that when Campbell argues in a similar way he doesn't draw the same inference that May does.

> I am a Baptist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Congregationalist, a Methodist, a Catholic in the proper unappropriated sense of these words. But not one of them, nor all of them, express my views, my profession, or my practice as a disciple of Christ. In other words, I am an immerser; I believe in a presbytery or eldership in every congregation, and in overseers of the flock. (*Mill. Harb.*, 1839, p. 339)

Campbell goes on to say he is Methodist because he is methodical in his arrangements, and he is a Catholic in his view of the gospel. But none of these names fully represents the truth as he sees it, he says, so he chooses to call himself simply a Disciple or Christian. He has no aversion to capital letters!

There is one important thing that brother Campbell doesn't do that brother May does do: *he doesn't imply that all the others are denominations while his group is not.* I don't think he would include in his list "I am a disciple but not a Disciple of Christ," or "I am a member of the church of Christ but not the Church of Christ."

Campbell was well aware that he had created another denomination, even if that was not his intention, and in his day it wore three names, not just one: Church of Christ or Christian Church (favored by the Stone movement) and Disciples of Christ (favored by the Campbell movement). Once the movements united they wore all three names. But they realized they were denominational (not sectarian) names in that they constituted still another distinct religious community, which is what denomination means.

Now and again Campbell would use such language as "our denomination" or "we as a denomination," as in his1840 *Millennial Harbinger* (p. 556): "We, as a denomination, are as desirous as ever to unite and co-operate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant." He wanted to be a non-sectarian denomination working with other churches for unity.

It would be beautifully liberating if the Churches of Christ, and the Independent Christian Churches as well, could accept this simple truth. We would be less isolated from other Christians, and it would position us to take part in meaningful dialogue and cooperative efforts with the church at large. All this of course without any compromise of vital truth. I dream of our Churches of Christ joining the Christian world rather than presuming that *they* are the Christian world!— *the Editor*

DON'T POUR WATER ON THEM

Cecil Hook

If you do not believe that the Holy Spirit works in our lives today, you will consider that Paul's negative exhortation, "Quench not the Spirit," has no present application. If, however, you believe that He lives in us and empowers us, let me propose to you some applications of this negative exhortation.

Phillips offer this rendering of 1 Thess. 5:19: "Never damp the fire of the Spirit, and never despise what is spoken in the name of the Lord." The exercise of God-given gifts must not be discouraged. Water is not to be poured on the flames of the Spirit. Spirit directed messages are not to be taken lightly.

Does not each have a gift of the Spirit? Paul declared, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). We won't stop here to argue if these are "miraculous" gifts or "inherent" abilities given us individually, for either kind would be of the Spirit. "What have you that you did not receive?" Paul probes; "If you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (1 Cor. 4:7) It is most important that we use the endowment given us and to encourage the exercise of the abilities given to others.

We are not just speaking of stifling the Spirit within us by our weak faith, lack of concern, or ignorance. We are concerned here with our disdaining, putting down, limiting, and opposing others in the exercise of their gifts.

Countless good men have had the gift of pastoring whom we have refused to recognize as shepherds because they were not also blessed with children. Even though the Spirit enabled them, through our legalistic interpretation, we have ruled them out. And we have suffered because of it.

Gifted evangelists can proclaim Jesus with much power in our very community and, because they do not follow our party line or wear our sectarian name, we zealously oppose them both privately and publicly. Instead of fanning the flames of the Spirit, we pour water on them.

Teachers who have been illumined with deeper insights into the Scriptures are weeded out of the teaching program when they dare to reveal new understandings of doctrines. And private home study groups are often forbidden by the very elders who encourage individual study. They fear that something new may be taught. From such practice, one might get the idea that Paul said, "Quench the Spirit; despise prophesying!"

On the "birthday of the church" Peter declared that, according to God's plan, women would prophesy. In harmony with that Paul approved their teaching prerogative in the Corinthian assemblies as long as they wore the customary veil, corrected certain abuses, and observed the same decorum as applied to men. But this work of the Spirit through women has been doused with the waters of disdain and prohibition through the centuries. What a tragic loss! And what an awesome accountability we face! His gifts endow while we disallow! "Do not despise prophesying."

Various persons have been gifted to serve God and man in some private ministry only to be informed that they were in opposition to God because they were not working "Through the church under the oversight of the elders." Turn on the water!

In accord with my upbringing, I formerly had no problem in dealing with the Holy Spirit in my life. He wasn't there! He did nothing! Neither did he work in others! But no longer do I limit the activity of the Spirit. Because he does not do all the evidently "miraculous" things for me that others claim he blesses them with, I do not limit what he may do in their lives. I don't have to oppose all that I do not understand or experience. I would prefer to be in error by mistakenly crediting the Spirit with good things in the lives of others than to be guilty of quenching, disdaining, and resisting his work in their lives because of my mistaken judgment.

Our oneness in the body is a gift, for the "unity of the Spirit" is not an accomplishment of man but of the Spirit. But the sectarian spirit, which lets us reject other brothers with whom the Spirit has united us in one body, is a work of the flesh directly opposed to the Spirit. When you reject brothers because they do not agree with you, you are guilty of the devastating sin of working against the Spirit.

A sad aspect to this matter is that our people have not been mean, unkind, or rebellious generally. Like the Jews of Jesus' day, we have been a people zealous for the law. But therein is the tragedy. Our misdirection has come mainly from interpreting the law of Christ as a legal code. Our attitude has become as that of the Pharisees. And if Stephen were writing this, he would probably cry out to us as he did to them, "You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 7:51)

Would we continue to resist by stoning his messenger, or would we accept the enabling Spirit and encourage those whom he endows? Let us no longer pour water on the flames of the Spirit. — *1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX 78130*

OUR CHANGING WORLD

We have waited to make this announcement until we could be sure. The Lord willing, once this journal ceases with next month's issue we will continue to keep in touch with our subscribers by way of a newsletter, probably every month except the summer months. The name will be *Last Time Around*, and there will be no subscription price. Every person now on our mailing list will receive the newsletter free. Names may be added by anyone and without charge, no limit. It will regularly be an 8 by 11 inch fold (four pages), but we may occasionally add inserts on special topics. We will continue such features as Changing World, Book Notes, and Readers' Exchange, but the names may change. There will be space for two or three short articles. Ouida is less than enthusiastic about this, saying that if I am going to quit I ought to quit, but like the good sport she is she is going along. But it is a tenuous arrangement with no commitment as to time, maybe a year, maybe longer. We'll see how it goes. I tell Ouida it is like breaking any habit. Sometimes one has to let go gradually. So, if all goes as planned, you will receive your last *Restoration Review* next month, then in January you will receive the first issue of *Last Time Around*. There will be no renewals and no one dropped from our mailing list, except those who move without giving us their new address and those who write and tell us they do not want to receive it.

Ouida and I drove to Tulsa last month where I conducted a series for the Memorial Drive Church of Christ. It was a delightful experience that enabled us to see a number of longtime friends. When I am with a congregation like that, one filled with good works and eager to learn more of God's truth, I am reminded what a great people we are. This month we will drive to Springfield, Mo. to hold a similar series for the Glendale Christian Church. On that trip we will get to visit with some of Ouida's family who live in the same state. It is such a delight to have Ouida with me after her being preoccupied with more pressing matters for so long. The folk out there in the churches, who have read about Ouida in this column all these years, are pleased to get to meet her. We are beginning to plan a number of things now that we are freer, including a possible trip to Australia.

Our next issue will be the last of *Restoration Review*, and we are going to have something very special, an article by Ouida! It will be about angels. She has prepared this material for her "class with the girls," as I call it, and I have at last persuaded her to pass some of her findings along to our readers. This will be her first-ever article. What a way to bring a journal to a glorious demise, an article about angels by an angel!

Our front yard has been the scene of some excitement of late. A bike-a-thon was the occasion of some 700 bicyclists riding by our house on a recent Saturday, all day long. One of them, a middle-aged fellow who was trying to do a 60-odd mile trek, fell at curbside right in front of our home, a heart attack it turned out to be. Ouida summoned the emergency crew, who were here in a matter of three or four minutes. While our neighbors huddled in our yard, quietly and prayerfully, the medics worked for thirty minutes or so to save his life, first on the street, then in the ambulance where they were well-equipped. He never made any response; we all supposed he was gone. We later inquired and learned that the news was bad; he was alive but in a coma. The next day Ouida and I visited his distraught wife at the hospital, a stranger to us of course, and prayed for her husband. The last we heard he had been taken to a hospital near his home, still in a coma. Things like that bring neighbors closer

together, and reminds them how tenuous life is.

While less significant and dramatic, someone in a car stole two packages of books, intended for the postman, from our mailbox out front. A neighbor saw him and told us, but she failed to get the license number. Ouida reported it to the postal authorities, but there was little they could do. After an hour or so a thoughtful citizen came to our door with two empty jiffy bags, duly addressed and stamped, that he had found discarded a few blocks away, thinking they might be important to us. Ouida surmised that a thief would have no interest in religious books and would discard them or maybe even mail them, while I supposed he would at least try to take the several dollars in stamps. He threw away the stamps and kept the books! These included Carl Ketcherside's *The Twisted Scriptures* and my *The Hope of the Believer*, along with our joint writings, edited by Cecil Hook, *Our Heritage In Unity and Fellowship*. Now, isn't that a good recommendation? If a thief would steal them perhaps you should buy them. See Book Notes for prices. But I keep thinking about that thief reading those books. Wouldn't it be great if they turned his life around and affected where he spends eternity. Would that be stealing your way to heaven?

Ouida and I plan to attend Restoration Forum X, to be held at Skillman Church of Christ in Dallas, Nov. 10-12. It is a unity conference for Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. The previous nine gatherings have proven to be conciliatory. This is the first one to be held in Texas. Noted speakers are scheduled from both sides, including Charles Hodge, Lynn Anderson, and Carroll Osburn from Churches of Christ and Knofel Staton, Marshall Leggett, and Sam Stone from the Christian Churches. Call the church at 214-823-2179. I will be one of the few there well acquainted with both sides, and probably the only one there that enjoys beautiful fellowship with both sides. I am, for instance, acquainted with all six men named, and gladly claim each one as a dear brother, *with no distinctions made!* I have only one complaint: no women are on the program. Unity will continue to elude us until we include our sisters and cease being male-dominated.

READER'S EXCHANGE

It seems that the Church of Christ wants to clone its members. Yet we serve a God who can't stand to create two snowflakes alike. Are we not more precious and unique than snowflakes? You and Carl Ketcherside have been voices crying in the wilderness of conformity, pleading for unity in diversity. I want to thank you for your efforts and the price you have paid to be the spokesman for the rights of the individual. I have not always felt this way. There was a time when I thought you and Carl had horns hidden under your hats and tails tucked down your trousers. But there is a funny thing about truth. Once you see it, you can't unsee it, not and be honest. — *Randy Massie, Howard, Pa.*

There is no way I can express to you my love for you both for all you have done these many years to encourage and teach the members of the Church of Christ, and those others with whom we should have fellowship. I feel as I am sure others do, that it is wise for you to retire, but your paper has meant so much to me and to Morris when he was living. — *Amber Yadon, Portales, NM*

As for your series on what the Church of Christ must do, I find nothing with which I disagree. What you have said describes the first 50 years I spent in the Church of Christ. I was faithful in attendance and gave generously, but I was scared of going to hell. I had bypass surgery followed by a heart attack.

Imagine going through all that when you are not sure of your salvation. I learned about grace through long hours of study and with the help of some dear brethren. At first my mind was closed, but gradually I came to see many errors in Church of Christ teaching. I am no longer afraid, and I remain in the Church of Christ in hope that I can teach others some things I have learned about grace. — *George R. Clark, Snyder, Tx.*

It looks to me as if it is a simple thing for us to have fellowship together regardless of our differences. The older I get the more I see that differences are more congregational than they are doctrinal. Your readers will miss your publication after this year. I hope you will have some means of keeping us in touch with your activities and let us know what is going on in the church at large. — *Ralph Davis, Kirkwood, Mo.*

Carl Ketcherside's best was *The Death of the Custodian*, and I think yours might be "What Must the Church of Christ Do to be Saved?" I hope you will publish it in book form. I think it could make a big difference in the transition the church is making. — *Adele Bowen Rogers, Farmington, NM*

I grew up in the Churches of Christ in the Southeast. I am currently an elder in a Christian Church in Honolulu. I appreciate the "Tyranny of Opinionism" that you write about and seek to be objective and open to the Lord's leading. I firmly believe the statement "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love." I have learned much about love by reading our Restoration fathers that has helped me capture their zeal. We need a revival of the Restoration plea. — *J. Harrison Hassell, Kailua, Hawaii*

Your series on what the Church of Christ must do is outstanding. Your honest and forthright assessment is as refreshing as a spring breeze. I believe every denomination could apply what you say to its own situation. Most especially, though, I hope the Restoration churches will hear your prophetic message and heed it. — *Judith Hazen, Milligan College, Tn.*

Your series on what the Church of Christ must do is one of the best, if not the very best, recipe for reform within our churches. I especially appreciated your exposing our exclusive claims and the fallacy that we are a first-century church. — *Marguerite McSpadden, Dumas, Tx.*

BOOK NOTES

Now that this paper is soon to be history our back issues will be more in demand. We have about 70 different issues (loose copies) dating back for 25 years, but no year is complete. These are 40 cents each for as many as you wish, postpaid, or we'll send you a sampler of 15 copies, selected at random, for $5.00 postpaid. Our six bound volumes make for a handsome matching set, with dust jacket, introduction, and table of contents. These cover eleven years, 1978-1990, except 1979-80. The price of $65.00 is actually less than the sub price for all those years. If you would like to get the bound volumes one at a time, you might start with *The Hope of the Believer* (1989-90), $15.00 postpaid.

When a man suffers rejection by his own party for writing a book, the chances are it is worth reading. *The Divorced and Remarried Who Would Come to God* by Homer Hailey is such a book. He contends that God allows the divorced to start over with the past forgiven. $5.50 postpaid.

The Church In Transition by Jim Woodruff is a call for change in the Churches of Christ. It is a hard-hitting attack on traditions that have kept us isolated from others and divided among ourselves. He offers solutions. We will send you a copy for $7.95

Another volume that calls for change is Walt Yancey's *Endangered Heritage: An Examination of Church of Christ Doctrine*. He shows from our pioneers that the Church of Christ got derailed along the way on such things as thinking of themselves as the only Christians, instrumental music, exclusivism, not being a denomination. Highly resourceful and readable. $9.95 postpaid.

We are pleased that *Our Heritage In Unity and Fellowship*, a collection of writings by Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, is such a handsome volume and well-edited by Cecil Hook. There are numerous articles on Restoration history. $9.95 postpaid.

Captives of the Word by Louis and Bess Cochran is "A Narrative History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Churches (Independent), and the Churches of Christ." It is a factual and exciting account of our history. $13.50 postpaid.

Faith Martin's *Call Me Blessed* continues to be a favorite among those who are looking for a reasonable and resourceful treatment of the role of women in the ministry of the church. Her approach reflects a love for Christ and the Bible. $9.95 postpaid.

Now that this journal will soon be no more, I am asked to suggest other papers among us with similar goals. I suggest three this time around: *Ensign*, 2710 Day Rd., Huntsville, Al. 35801 ($5 per annum); *The Christian Appeal*, 2310 Anna St., Amarillo, Tx. 79106 ($6 per annum); *Integrity*, 4051 S. Lincoln Rd., Mt. Pleasant, Mi. 48858 (No charge, donations accepted). You might also request at no charge to be added to the mailing list of *California Letter*, Box 811, Corcoran, Ca. 93212 and *The Persuader*, 2920 Prairie Creek, Dallas, Tx. 75227. These last two are unique in that they circulate primarily among right wing segments, the first among the one-cup, non-Sunday school; the second among the conservative, anti-cooperative. Each is a burr under the saddle in his particular group. Each is a beautiful example of how one need not leave where he is, but work for peace and unity and look to God for the increase. One might be in a sect without himself being a sectarian, which, probably, is where most of us are.

If you were a conscientious objector during World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War, or part of a family of anyone who was, Prof. Michael Casey, Pepperdine University, Malibu, Ca. 90263 invites you to contact him. You can be of help to him in a research project he is doing on pacifism in the Churches of Christ.

All available issues for 1992 are $6.00. The next issue (Dec. 1992) will be the last issue.

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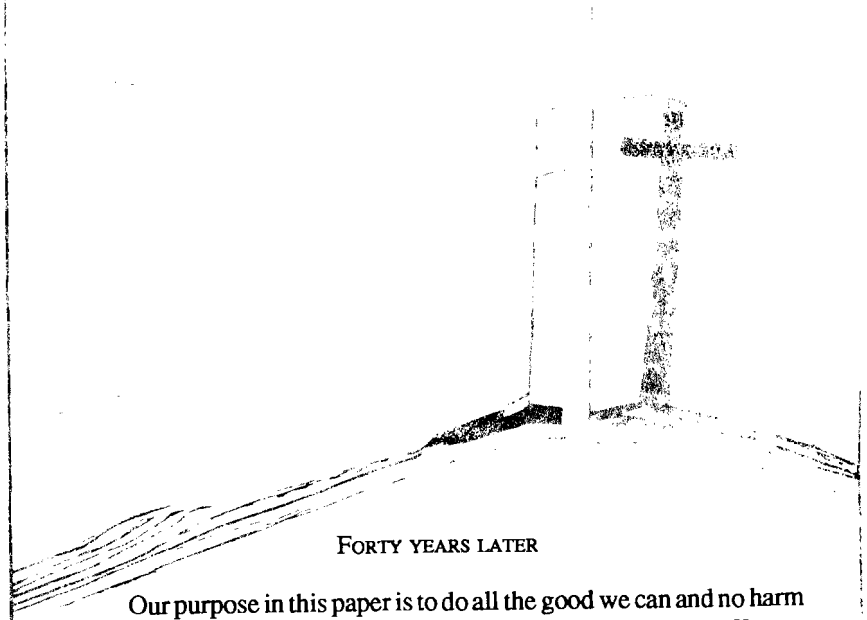

FORTY YEARS LATER

Our purpose in this paper is to do all the good we can and no harm at all. We may not succeed, but we shall try. It is a sincere effort to help the honest and good heart.--From the first editorial of this journal when it was named *Bible Talk*, Oct. 1952.

In This Issue:

What the Old Testament Meant to Jesus
Some Churches That Are Leading the Way
When Angels Come Calling

Volume 34, No. 10 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **December, 1992**